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COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE
RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 216th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 24 July 1995, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. CISSE (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The agenda was adopted.

REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN ON THE TWELFTH NORTH AMERICAN NGO SYMPOSIUM, HELD AT UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK, 19 TO 21 JUNE 1995, AND ON THE SEMINAR ON PALESTINIAN ADMINISTRATIVE, MANAGERIAL AND FINANCIAL NEEDS AND CHALLENGES, HELD AT UNESCO HEADQUARTERS, PARIS, 28 TO 30 JUNE 1995

2. The CHAIRMAN said that the non-governmental organization symposium held in New York had for its theme "The United Nations on its Fiftieth Anniversary and the Question of Palestine". North American, European, Palestinian and Israeli experts had presented papers on the political, economic and social challenges as well as obstacles to and opportunities for the ongoing peace process. The specific issues under discussion included refugees and displaced persons, settlements, the status of Jerusalem, securing respect for international humanitarian law, Palestinian women, promoting civil society, economic and social development and labour issues. A total of 73 non-governmental organizations had attended the symposium, and 16 Governments participated as observers. Mr. Al-Kidwa had read out a message from President Yasser Arafat.

3. The symposium had provided an opportunity for non-governmental organizations to unite, coordinate, intensify and diversify their efforts and activities and thus increase support for and assistance to the Palestinian people. The deliberations had demonstrated that the United Nations system, the Committee and non-governmental organizations had an important role to play during the current period of reconstruction and nation-building.

4. The North American non-governmental organizations would continue their practice of having Standing Committees in areas of special concern such as human rights, economic development, religious groups and the status of women.

5. The seminar held in Paris under the auspices of the Committee had provided a framework for an exchange of views on various aspects of Palestinian administrative, financial and managerial needs and challenges. The seminar had been attended by Palestinian, Israeli and other experts, United Nations bodies and agencies involved in the projects in the region, donor countries, regional organizations, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations active in the field. Representatives of 50 Governments were also present.

6. Some 20 experts had presented papers on different aspects of the Palestinian question and representatives of 16 Governments and organizations made statements during the deliberations. The programme for the seminar had started with a plenary session on the theme of "Palestinian administrative, managerial and financial needs and challenges - the role of international assistance". Round-table discussions had been held on the themes of the Palestinian Authority - needs and challenges of administration; laying the foundation for public financial management; supporting the development of the

Palestinian municipalities and public utilities; and human resources development and management - building institutional capacity.

7. The seminar had highlighted the fact that the ability to meet Palestinian needs while establishing a viable and effective administration in the area under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority was an essential stepping-stone in the struggle for self-determination. Efficiently functioning institutions of government, a developing economy, the creation of employment opportunities and the effective provision of social services would provide solid foundations for the next stage of the peace process. It was clear that the Committee functioned as a catalyst in bringing together Palestinian administrators and their counterparts from the international community and by initiating thorough discussion of the needs and challenges of administration and management. The Committee intended to consider appropriate follow-up measures to the various recommendations made in the course of the seminar.

8. Mr. FERNÁNDEZ PALACIOS (Cuba), supported by Mr. ZLENKO (Ukraine), said that he had noted with satisfaction the Committee's intention to consider effective follow-up measures to the recommendations made at the Paris seminar.

9. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) said he hoped it would be possible to hold a similar meeting the following year with particular emphasis on the economic situation in Palestine.

10. Mr. ZAINUDDIN (Malaysia) asked whether the Secretariat would be able to prepare a list of the recommendations made at the seminar and circulate it to members of the Committee.

11. The CHAIRMAN stressed the need to implement the recommendations outlined at the seminar and ensure that they did not remain a dead letter. Certain bodies within the United Nations system had asked to study the contents of the report of the Paris seminar with a view to taking action on their own initiative. The impetus towards implementation had been provided by officials within the United Nations itself. Furthermore, the report had been submitted to the Secretary-General with a request that it be circulated to all States members of the Economic and Social Council and all States Members of the United Nations as a document of the forthcoming fiftieth General Assembly. In response to the remarks of the Observer for Palestine, he hoped that the Economic and Social Council would recommend that a follow-up meeting should be held the following year.

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12. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that the provisional programme of the scheduled Vienna meeting as contained in working paper No. 5/Rev.1 had had to be revised in consultation with the relevant Coordinating Committees of Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine and the names of the participating experts had been added.

13. Mr. ZLENKO (Ukraine) said that the proposed event would undoubtedly make a worthy contribution to the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations while at the same time furthering the debate on Palestinian issues.

14. The CHAIRMAN took it that the Committee wished to approve working paper No. 5/Rev.1.

15. It was so decided.

OTHER MATTERS

16. Mr. CASSAR (Malta) conveyed his Government's compliments to the Committee on its excellent work. In particular, the Committee had shown flexibility and pragmatism in adapting to developments in the Middle East, in relation to both the peace process and Palestinian needs. The seminar in Paris, which had once more shown the intimate links between political and economic processes, had been impressive for the frankness with which both the representatives of Palestinian authorities and those of United Nations agencies had tackled the issues and acknowledged the undoubted difficulties. He welcomed the fact that changes in the political climate appeared to have encouraged greater participation in the question of Palestine from countries which had previously not been very active. Lastly, he reminded the Committee that, however necessary assistance was, it should not be imposed on the Palestinians who were the real decision makers.

17. The CHAIRMAN, supported by Mr. FARHADI (Vice-Chairman of the Committee), endorsed earlier comments on increased participation, saying that the Committee would benefit by a broadening of its composition. The Western European countries, in particular, had a larger role to play with regard to the economic and social aspects of the Palestinian question, which had become as important as the political aspects since the end of the cold war. The Bureau could profitably examine the matter to see how such expansion would benefit the Committee.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.